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A

CRITIQUE

ON THE

Koßebue (a. F. Z. von)

TRAGEDY OF PIZARRO, *K*

AS REPRESENTED AT

DRURY LANE THEATRE

WITH SUCH

Uncommon Applause.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A NEW PROLOGUE,

THAT HAS NOT YET BEEN SPOKEN.

THE SECOND EDITION.

Now then for my magnificence! my battle! my noise! and my pro-
cession! CRITIC.

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PROLOGUE.

TO BE SPOKEN BY ANY BODY, IN THE CHARACTER
OF A PUPPET-SHOW MAN.

WALK in, walk in, pray, gentlemen and ladies;
Though puffing, you may think, a show-man's trade is,
Yet, on my honour, if you will but stay,
You'll see what does not happen every day.
Grown gentlemen and ladies, pray walk in;
Our *puppet-show*'s "just going to begin;"
My little *mistresses*, and *masters* too,
Walk in, the entertainment's fit for you.
Here shall you see how neatly we have spread
Our *English* gilt on *German* gingerbread;
And when you hear our *trumpets* sound for battle,
Shall soon be *wean'd* from *coral-bells* and *rattle*.
Now, gentlefolks, behind the curtain peep;
The lady you see there, is fast asleep;
Sweetly she sleeps, though war and death surround her,
Close to her nose a four-and-twenty pounder.
Next, you the Temple of the Sun behold:
Who says, that "all which glitters is not gold?"
See through the roof, along a magic wire,
Straight down from Heav'n descends a bail of fire.
Fear not—The Priests to fire are quite enur'd,
And, for the Virgins, see, they're all *insur'd*.
Then you shall have what children take delight in,
Upon the stage, some pretty small-sword fighting;
Anvil on hammer each by turns shall knock,
Fierce as the heroes of St. Dunstan's clock;

Or, if we may compare small *toys* with great,
The *wooden* butcher thumps the ox's pate.

Fine speeches you shall have, both loud and long,
Thunder and lightning, and, between, a song;
Which proves that thunder, and that lightning too,
Have a fine taste for music—just like you;
And you shall have, the more to raise your wonder, }
(Pray, let the *novelty* excuse the *blunder*,)
Sometimes the *lightning* first, sometimes the *thunder*. }

In short, whilst we your *eye-sight* are commanding,
We shall not much *fatigue* your *understanding*;
And though, like modest men, we can't be sure
None of our *tricks* you may have seen before,
In this at least our pantomime is *new*,
We give you *five* long acts instead of *two*;
Five *ling'ring* acts stuff'd full of stage *devices*,
Five acts of pantomime—at *playhouse prices!!!*

A CRI-

A

CRITIQUE,

&c.



THE tragedy of Pizarro, which has excited so much public curiosity and applause, being now submitted to dispassionate perusal, it becomes the duty of impartial criticism to see how far the extravagant praise bestowed on it in the theatre can with justice be echoed from the closet; and stripping it of the pomp of procession, the glitter of scenery, and the noise of music, sacred and profane, unprejudiced by the voice of the multitude, and unawed by the authority of a name, to examine this singular production.

The discovery and conquest of America
by the Spaniards have been dramatized by
a va-

a variety of English authors, whose attempts are now so entirely forgotten, as to give the piece under consideration the character of novelty. The subject is perhaps as fit an one for the stage as any other, in which an author derives his knowledge of the principal personages of his drama from history alone; which, when most circumstantial and impartial, can no better express the character of human manners, than a shadow can afford a likeness of the human body; and the policy of a writer who dramatizes a nation of men of whom he knows little, merely because his readers know less, and his audience nothing, resembles the humble art of a juggler, whose success depends not upon his being a *great conjuror himself*, but upon his spectators being *no conjurors at all*. For though there be a general analogy in the *feelings* of men, yet there is an infinite variety in the *mode of expressing* those feelings, which nothing will enable us in any degree to acquire, but a constant and minute attention to the characters which we mean to represent. There therefore appears to me a fundamental error in the choice of the sub-

ject of this drama, which, I think, is not made amends for by the execution of it.

The first scene opens with a magnificent view of the Spanish camp and a pavilion near it, on one side of which Elvira is discovered sleeping: when the audience have been allowed a reasonable time to admire the scenery, Valverde, who is described to be Pizarro's secretary (his secretary *at war* we suppose), entering, kneels, and attempts to kiss the hand of the sleeping fair.—Considering all circumstances, it is not very probable that the lady should have indulged, at that crisis, her country custom of taking a *siesta*, or that, if she had been so disposed, the officious Secretary would have ventured so rude an intrusion; but, as Mr. Puff observes*, “Smaller things must give way

* DANGLE.

But pray, are the centinels to be asleep?

PUFF.

Fast as watchmen.

SNEER.

Is n't that odd, though, at such an *alarming crisis*?

PUFF.

To be sure it is; but smaller things must give way to a striking scene at the opening; that's a rule.

Critic.

to

to a striking scene at the opening." We are at least led to expect from his presumption, that his business is urgent; but after waking her, he proceeds to inquire by what magic Pizarro had gained her heart. This produces much useful information to the audience from both the personages, who inform one another of a great number of facts, with which, from their nature, they must be already well acquainted; but as "the audience are not supposed to know any thing of the matter*," it might be hypercritical to object to this long-established mode of conveying information, which, in some shape or other, is absolutely necessary, and is not, I think, detailed with more dulness in this than in the generality of modern tragedies. If our readers should wish to see a perfect scene of this kind, we must refer them to a most admirable one between Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Christopher Hatton, in the piece before alluded to. We are next introduced to Pizarro, who enters with the usual flourish of trumpets. This scene, like the former one, is occupied in enlightening the audience with a sketch

* *Critic.*

of the life and character of Alonzo. After another flourish of trumpets the priest Las-Cafas and the Spanish Generals claim our attention; one of the latter exclaims—
 “ Battle! battle! then death to the armed, and chains for the defenceless!” This appears to me a little ambiguous; but is explained by the next speaker, who replies, “ Death to the whole Peruvian race!” but this explanation is quite spoiled by the third, who says, “ Yes, General; the attack, and instantly! Then shall Alonzo, *basking at his ease*, soon cease to scoff our suffering, and scorn our force.”—How Alonzo is to be induced to this by “ *basking at his ease*,” is above my humble comprehension*.

The

* We hope our readers, in comparing the two following passages, will think the coincidence entirely accidental.

PIZARRO.

It appears we are agreed.

ALMAGRO AND DAVILLA.

We are.

GONZALO.

All! Battle! Battle!

Pizarro.

EARL OF LEICESTER.

Then are we all resolv'd?

B

ALL;

The other part of this scene is consumed by a long and tedious appeal of Las-Cafas to the humanity of his countrymen, which finding ineffectual, he declares that his aged eyes shall no longer be *seared* by the *horrors* they have witnessed, and determines to hide himself in caves and forests, to commune with tigers and savage beasts, and retires to cultivate this new society, dropping a fly hint at the same time, that they will meet at the day of judgment. Gomez now enters, who gives the following circumstantial, not to say logical, account of having taken a Peruvian: "On yonder hill among the palm-trees I have *surpris'd* an old Ca-

ALL.

We are; all resolv'd.

EARL OF LEICESTER.

To conquer, or be free?

ALL.

To conquer, or be free.

EARL OF LEICESTER.

All?

ALL.

All.

DANGLE.

Nem. con. Egad!

PUFF.

O yes; when they do agree on the stage, their unanimity is wonderful.

Critic.

cique;

cique; escape by *flight* he could not (if he could, the old Cacique would have *surpris'd* him), and we seized him and his attendant *unresisting*." — After saying he had surprised an old man, we might of ourselves infer, that "escape by flight he could not," and it is yet less necessary to add, "he seized him and his attendant unresisting." It reminds us of, though it does not equal, a passage* we have elsewhere met with. The old Cacique is brought in, and the dialogue of this scene is very spirited, and reflects a temporary gleam on the uniform flatness which has preceded it; yet no sooner do we feel a warm interest in the fate of the man, and are led to hope for a much longer acquaintance, than, to our great mortification, he is suddenly murdered, and we are left to regret that one of the best scenes in the play has *nothing* to do with the business of it. We have now a short dialogue, which says nothing, between Elvira and the Secretary; and a long soliloquy by the lady, the latter part of which,

* GOVERNOR.

The Spanish fleet thou canst not see—because

—It is not yet in sight.

Critic.

B 2

I think,

I think, verges close upon incomprehensibility.

The second act opens with a very pretty family picture—Cora sitting at the root of a tree, playing with her child, and Alonzo looking over them. After a tender dispute between the father and mother, which of them the infant most resembles, they amuse the audience with that sort of domestic tittle tattle, which, though perfectly natural, is very dull and insipid to all but the parties concerned. “When first the white blossoms of his teeth appear breaking the crimson buds that did incase them,” is to me rather a ludicrous description of a child’s cutting his teeth. The rage for introducing children upon the stage has of late years so considerably increased, that I expect some author of great *infantine* genius will boldly lay the scene in the *nursery*, and entirely compose his *dramatis personæ* of *young ladies*, who have not got out of *long coats*, and *young gentlemen*, who have not been more than a twelvemonth in *breeches*. After another flourish of trumpets (for of whatever nation the hero may be, he

he is always announced by the trumpet*), Rolla, the Peruvian hero, interrupts the matrimonial duet for the purpose of making a trio, which, if possible, is still more "flat and unprofitable." However, as some amends for the two preceding scenes, we are now presented with the Temple of the Sun, where the whole of the Peruvian *Dramatis Personæ* soon after assemble. Ataliba their king, who appears to be "no orator, as Brutus was," desires Rolla to make the soldiers a speech, and he begins a very long one by premising that "words were never so little needed." Whilst the fine declamation of the first actor of the age resounded in my ear, I could find little to admire in this flaming harangue, except the comparison of the vulture and the lamb, which I thought, and still think, a

* As noise is principally considered in this kind of music, I would recommend to the attention of the managers an instrument much used in Africa; a sort of horn formed of a large tooth of the elephant, which makes a sound, I am credibly informed, not equalled by the roaring of any beast in that quarter of the globe, and which, by being judiciously used at proper intervals, will act as a complete *larum* to that part of the audience who require some sort of *stimulus* to keep them *awake*.

very fine image; but which may be met with, much better expressed, in Mr. Sheridan's famous speech on the impeachment of Mr. Hastings. On a serious perusal of this oration, and having no longer the magnificence of Peruvian idolatry before my eyes, I cannot help thinking it is not so well adapted to the *corps* in the *Temple*, as it would be to the *Temple corps*, or any other of the present loyal associations; for, throughout, the facts appear to me either *distorted* or *supplied*, and adapted to a much more recent series of events than the conquest of Peru. They next proceed to "consecrate the banners." The High-priest begins an invocation, which is followed by chorusses of Priests and Virgins. A ball of fire lights upon the altar, and the whole assembly* then

* PUFF.

Hush! in great emergencies,
There is nothing like a prayer.

EARL OF LEICESTER.

O mighty Mars! assist thy votary now.

GOVERNOR.

Yet do not rise—hear me!

MASTER OF HORSE.

And me!

KNIGHT.

And me!

SIR

then join in a prayer and thanksgiving. Observe the succession of incidents—A solemn march! a speech! a procession! an invocation! a chorus of priests and virgins! a ball of fire! and a thanksgiving!!! following one another with the *rapid variety* of a magic lantern. This is Tragedy!!! To introduce fire falling from *heaven* at the invocation of *mankind*, is a stride of fancy which gives us room to hope that in the course of the next season we shall be presented with the *Deity* in *propria persona*. And instead of *playing off* a single insigni-

SIR WALTER.

And me!

SIR CHRISTOPHER.

And me!

PUFF.

Now, pray all together.

ALL.

Behold thy votaries submissive beg
That thou wilt deign to grant them all they ask,
Assist them to accomplish all their ends,
And sanctify whatever means they use
To gain them.

PUFF.

Vastly well, gentlemen—Is that well managed or not? have you such a prayer as that on your stage?

SNEER.

Not *exactly*.

Critic.

ficant

ficant *feu de joye*, he will, to the great *edification* and *delight* of a *gaping audience*, introduce the planets in a *country dance*, or the sun and moon in a *pas de deux*, to the tune of

High diddle diddle,
The cat's in the fiddle:
The cow *jump'd* over the *moon*, &c.

This is a flight beyond criticism. We attempt not to soar

“ Above the visible diurnal sphere.”

Should this piece ever be cut down to a *pantomime* * (an event by no means improbable), we may then *fairly* criticize this wonderful incident, unless indeed it should be *wisely omitted*, as being too *outré* for that species of composition, in which I recollect to have once seen represented the vulture feeding on the bowels of Prometheus; but the author, having no *precedent*,

* The very great, though not *extraordinary* success, which this play has met with by a *judicious omission* of the *dialogue* at the great *summer puppet-shows*, justifies this expectation, and affords an apprehension that the amphitheatre of Mr. Astley, the Circus, &c. &c. may in time become *dangerous rivals* to *Drury Lane!!!*

did not venture to introduce him stealing fire from heaven. Shall we say of the whole of this scene, that it " goes entirely for what we call *situation* and *stage effect*, by which the *greatest applause* may be obtained without the assistance of *language*, *sentiment*, or *character** ?" Who could have supposed the adapter would have exceeded the liberal limits † he had himself prescribed to theatrical absurdity, or that whilst he was most happily ridiculing the nonsense of others, he was indulging a prophetic laugh at the tragedy of Pizarro, and was not aware of the extent of his own genius ‡ ? The ceremony being over, and
news

* *Critic.*

† PUFF.

But what the plague! A play is not to show occurrences that happen every day, but things just so strange, that, though they never did, they might happen.

SNEER.

Certainly, nothing is unnatural that is not physically impossible.

Critic.

‡ By genius we do not mean invention, but only an happy *adaptation* of this incident to the stage; it being entirely taken from the following verses of 2 Chron. chap. vii.

c

" Now

news brought of the approach of the enemy, the King finds his courage rise, and begins a speech himself, in the following words: " My brethren, my sons, my friends, I know your valour." This miscellaneous mode of considering the same persons in different views of relationship who are no relations at all, is undoubtedly very ingenious, but not perfectly new*. The scene that follows provokes no observation, except as to a slight difference of opinion with respect to the word of battle, Alonzo exclaiming, " For the King and Cora;" and Rolla, with more gallantry, but less loyalty, " For

" Now when *Solomon* had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house.

" And when all the children of *Israel* saw how the fire came down and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground, and worshipped and praised the Lord.

" Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the Lord."

* TILBURINA.

And thou, my Whiskerandos, shouldst be father, and mother, brother, cousin, uncle, aunt, and friend to me!

Critic.

Cora:

Cora and the King." These two gentlemen, though bosom friends, do not settle this point of military etiquette with that mutual good understanding I have somewhere seen done by two mortal enemies*. The rest of this act will be read with little emotion of any kind. The incidents, though some of them are new, depend entirely upon bustle and scenery; and the introduction of the second Old Man and his Grandson, like that of the Cacique in the first act, gives us a mere glimpse of an interesting character, of which we are to see no more. The interest, however, does not equal the absurdity: it is most extremely improbable that an old blind man should thrust himself and his grandchild, about whom he seems very much terrified, into the heat of the battle.—His proper place certainly would have been the retreat for the matrons and virgins among the rocks.—He talks, too, more than once of *grasping*

* WHISKERANDOS.

Vengeance and Tilburina.

BEEF-EATER.

Exactly so.

C 2

Critic.
a sword;

a sword; a weapon, which in his days of chivalry was certainly not in use among the Peruvians. But what perhaps excites our wonder as much as any incident in the piece, is, that the virtuous Ataliba, who lives in the hearts of his people, being wounded and obliged to retire from the fight, is deserted by every one of his faithful soldiers (twelve thousand in number), without their leaving him a single weapon to defend himself; and he is quietly taken possession of by half a dozen Spaniards, that Rolla might have an opportunity to rescue him. The King's address to Rolla on presenting him with his sun of diamonds, which the Spaniards seem to have left him for that purpose, is formal enough, but the concluding thought is pretty and natural.

The third act opens with the triumphant return of the Peruvians to the retreat of their women among the rocks, where Cora is informed of Alonzo having been made prisoner; and they all repair to the Temple for another general thanksgiving. We are next introduced to Cora and her child in wood; and Rolla entering, informs her he attends

attends her summons at the appointed spot. They do not, however, appear in the preceding scene to have made any appointment, nor indeed has any time intervened for that or any other purpose; a mistake that might be easily rectified; and which would not have been noticed, but to evince the extreme carelessness and contempt of propriety which pervades this production. Having met, Rolla informs her that he had pledged his word to Alonzo to take Cora for his wife, and be a father to his child, if he should fall in battle. I see nothing in this that can possibly awaken suspicion in Cora, who is represented as a character of the most guileless simplicity of heart, who appears hitherto to have felt the most unbounded veneration for Rolla, and chiefly from a circumstance, which, of all others, would have made it impossible for her to suppose him guilty of the paltry artifice she now ascribes to him, that of having, after she was betrothed to him, generously resigned her to his friend. Urged however by the horrid *light* which *presses* on her brain, she exclaims, "Thou hast borne to me the *last* words of my Alonzo; now hear *mine*."

This

This prepares the audience for her *dying speech*. They are however disappointed; for besides another very long one, in the same scene, we have a great many more *last words*.—On leaving Rolla, she determines to go and turn up all the dead bodies of the slain till she finds Alonzo, and “shriek out his name till her veins snap;” that is, I suppose, till she breaks a blood-vessel; a bold figure certainly, if my conjecture is right; if not, the passage is to me unintelligible. The ensuing scene, between Elvira and Pizarro, is spirited; yet Pizarro’s *calculation* of the *merits* of Elvira, and her *claims* upon his *bounty*, is somewhat curious: “In love thou art thy sex’s miracle—in war the soldier’s pattern, and *therefore* my *whole* heart and *half* my acquisitions are thy *right*.” It certainly falls short of the gallantry in the following couplet:

Had I *ten* kingdoms, I’d give *nine*,
To make the charming Chloe mine.

And, I am apprehensive, when Elvira exclaims, “Who *could* not feel as I do, I condemn—who feeling so, yet *would* not act as I shall, I despise!” she talks neither English nor common sense. If it were possible

possible that any two persons could *feel alike* in any situation whatever, they must of necessity *act alike*; but our feelings depend upon a variety of circumstances, which never can be, at least never have been, assimilated in two different persons. The succeeding dialogue between Pizarro and Alonzo does not (except in the fine speech where he describes the improvement of the Peruvians) differ materially from the customary ones between a tyrant and a prisoner, in which they generally pelt one another with very hard words; the one frowning menace, the other sneering contempt; till being both fairly out of breath, the prisoner rattles his chains to show his independence, and folding his arms, swings off triumphantly to his dungeon. The scene that follows is a very fine one, and by far the best in the piece: the following passage in Elvira's soliloquy is truly sublime:

“Thou, whom yet no mortal hazard has appalled! thou, who on Panama's brow didst make alliance with the raving elements that tore the silence of that horrid night; when thou didst follow as thy pioneer

neer the crashing thunder's drift, and
 stalking o'er the trembling earth, didst plant
 thy banner by the red volcano's mouth!
 thou, who, when battling on the sea, and
 thy brave ship was blown to splinters, wast
 seen—as thou didst bestride a fragment of
 the smoking wreck—to wave thy glittering
 sword above thy head, as thou wouldst defy
 the world in that extremity!”

This is a noble picture of the intrepidity
 of Pizarro, but it bears no likeness to the
 original, who, from first to last, is a com-
 mon stage cut-throat in a black wig, delight-
 ing more in low cruelty than daring en-
 terprise, without genius to design great
 plans, without spirit to execute them,
 meanly exulting in prosperity, basely de-
 jected in adversity, bullied by a woman,
 and terrified by a dream.

We are now introduced to Alonzo in his
 cell, who, finding he has but an hour to
 live, determines “not to watch the coming
 dawn,” and liking “darkness better than
 light,” retires to an inward cavern in his
 prison to spend his remaining time *in*

prayer. A personage enters in the dress of a friar*, who endeavours to prevail upon the centinel to grant him an interview with Alonzo; but finding he cannot succeed, offers a bribe: all this is natural enough. The bribe being refused, he addresses himself, as a dernier resort, to the Spaniard's humanity, and his mode of doing this, I think, deserves some remark. Rolla asks him if he has a wife? Very luckily he has—Any children? Still more fortunately, four fine boys—Does he love his wife and children? He does, or at least says so, which here is the same thing—If he was doomed to die the next day, what would be his last† request? That some of his comrades should carry his dying blessing to his wife and children: to which the supposed friar replies, “Alonzo has a wife and child: I am come to receive for her and

* PUFF.

I would not have you be too sure he is a beef-eater.

Critic.

† The author, I suppose, means his *first* request. I cannot understand (though perhaps it is a common mode of expression) why a man's most earnest request should be his *last*.

D

for

for her babe the last blessing of my friend." This *argumentum ad hominem* is irresistible, and the centinel immediately softens into compliance. But, if he had been a bachelor, or, being married, had happened not to have had children, or, having a wife and children, if it would not have been his fancy, at the hour of death, that some of his comrades should carry his dying blessing to his wife and children, Rolla must have stopt short, and begun a new course of examination. This practice of bespeaking answers to questions, of creating an exact similarity of situation and sentiment between two persons who are perfect strangers to each other, and of characters perfectly dissimilar, is not the least happy deviation from nature in the work before us. The stranger, however, having obtained means to see Alonzo *for a few moments*, instead of flying to his cell, makes a soliloquy, in which he introduces a very long simile, about the *universal influence* of nature, to show how easy it is not to be *influenced* by her at all; after which he calls Alonzo, who, instead of being *at prayers*, is found "in *gentle sleep*," and being awakened, naturally enough inquires

quires of Rolla how he could pass the guard; Rolla having already wasted so much time in soliloquizing, observes, "there is not a moment to be lost in words," and then proceeds to inform Alonzo, that in passing the field of battle he robbed a friar of his canonicals, and in that disguise gained admittance. After a generous contest, usual in such cases, between Alonzo and his friend, the former is induced to leave Rolla in prison, and escape in the friar's cloak, after having received this discreet admonition: "Conceal thy face, and, that they may not clank, hold fast thy chains."—Elvira now enters, for the purpose of instigating Alonzo to the murder of the Spanish chief. It is impossible not to remark the singular delicacy of mind which distinguishes her throughout the whole of this transaction; she proudly *disdains* to make use of Secretary Valverde, as the instrument of Pizarro's assassination, thinking that *stabbing* a man in his *sleep* is an *office* above his *merit* (though, from being her only confident, he is the most likely person to be pitched upon for that enterprise); she therefore selects the *brave* and *virtuous* Alonzo; but finding he had made

his escape, without *shame* or *scruple*, she makes the proposal to the godlike Rolla, who approves, it seems, of the *action*, but does not like the *means*, and gravely observes, “ The God of justice sanctifies no evil as a step towards good; great actions cannot be achieved by wicked means.”— Does not the God of justice *sanctify* the amputation of a limb to save the rest of the body? Are not good and evil so inseparably blended with all our actions, that we cannot exist an hour without doing both? is not the character of Rolla a complete exemplification of it? Had he not the very moment before been *stripping* the friar, and endeavouring to *corrupt* the centinel, for the purpose of *achieving a great action*; and were not such means *wicked*? Of all stage nonsense such moral nonsense as this is the most insupportable. Upon Rolla’s declining the proposal, Elvira determines to perpetrate the deed herself; but the Peruvian, out of a *tender regard* for her *safety*, and being now, it seems, reconciled to the *means*, undertakes it, and for that purpose exclaims with Lady Macbeth, “ Give me the dagger.”—She then says, “ Now follow
me

me—but first—and dreadful is the hard necessity—you must strike down the guard.

“ *Roll.* The soldier who was on duty here ?

“ *Elv.* Yes, him—else seeing thee, the alarm will be instant.

“ *Roll.* And I must stab that soldier as I pass ? Take back thy dagger—”

This certainly produces effect ; but in the first place there was no occasion for them to go out that way, unless for the variety of leaving the prison, by a passage different from that through which Elvira entered it ; and had even this been necessary, the heroine, throughout the play, seems to have the whole of Pizarro’s army (not omitting the General himself) under very good *petticoat government* ; and this very centinel, whom it is now supposed necessary to murder, perfectly understood her *passport*, which he had declared not five minutes before to Rolla, “ they were all accustomed to obey : ” an assertion we may easily credit ; for after Elvira has introduced the Peruvian to Pizarro’s tent, she says, “ I will withdraw the guard that waits,” which indeed was a sort of *Irish precaution*
after

after they had reached undisturbed the spot, which, I presume, it was the business of this *guard* to protect.

We are now conducted to Pizarro's tent, who is described to be in "disturbed sleep *." Indeed, how at such a crisis he could sleep at all may excite our wonder; but a nap is the universal recipe throughout this piece for the cure of for-

* It may be collected, by comparing the following passages, how nearly *sleep* resembles *madness*.

(PIZARRO on a couch in disturbed sleep.)

PIZARRO.

(*In his sleep.*) No mercy, traitor!—Now at his heart—stand off there, you!—Let me see him bleed! Ha! Ha! Ha! Let me hear that groan again—

(*About a minute afterwards.*)

Away! away! hideous fiends! Tear not my bosom thus!—

Pizarro,

TILBURINA (*mad*).

The wind whistles—the moon rises—see,
They have kill'd my squirrel in his cage!

Is this a grasshopper? Ha! no; it is my

Whiskerandos—you shall not keep him—

I know you have him in your pocket—

An oyster may be cross'd in love! who says

A whale's a bird? Ha! did you call, my love?

—He's here! He's there! He's every where!—

Ah me! He's no where!

ROW,

row. Rolla, after viewing him for some time, exclaims, " God ! can this man sleep ! " and Pizarro, as if he was only counterfeiting, and had determined to hoax the Peruvian, starts and groans by way of answer, which is a new sleeping language, I suppose, to express a negative : for Rolla to have exclaimed, Can this man sleep without snoring ? and for Pizarro immediately to have snored, would have been just as probable, and much more entertaining. Rolla again relapsing into his first opinion, that the *action* will not justify the *means*, wakes Pizarro. This produces one of the finest situations the stage can boast, and, as far as I remember, perfectly new ; but the dialogue which follows is foolish enough.

" *Piz.* Who art thou, and what is thy will ?

" *Rol.* I am thine *enemy*, Peruvian Rolla. Thy death is not my *will*, or I could have slain thee sleeping."

To this Pizarro very naturally replies—

" Speak ! What else ? "

A question quite unanswerable ; unless Rolla, to make an empty parade of his generosity, and to ensure the death of a

woman whose motive he believed to be the salvation of his country, for the sake of sparing a man who was endeavouring to accomplish its destruction: instead of answering the question, Rolla thus proceeds: "Didst thou, or any of thy nation, ever yet show mercy to a Peruvian in your power?" Forgetting that he was *entirely* indebted for his present opportunity of showing his own *wonderful magnanimity* to the *centinel* of whose *head* he would not hurt a *hair*, "to save his heartstrings from consuming fire," and to Elvira, whose *whole body* he sacrifices without any remorse. The lady now enters, and finding the deed not done, boldly proclaims herself the instigator of it; whilst Rolla drily observes, "Had the *act* been as noble as the *motive*, he would not have shrunk from its performance;" the fact is, that, consistent with his general character, he would never have undertaken it: but when an author has determined to produce a great incident, he does not, like Rolla, scruple about the *means*. The ensuing scene between Elvira and Pizarro is spirited; but the following descrip-

description of the tortures she is likely to experience would disgrace an anatomical lecture :

“ *Elv.* Yes; rack me with the sharpest tortures that ever agoniz’d the human frame, it will be justice! Yes; bid the minions of thy fury *wrench forth the sinews* of those arms that have caress’d thee—even have defended thee! Bid them pour *burning metal* into the *bleeding cases* of these eyes, that so oft—oh God! have hung with love and homage on thy looks!—then approach me bound on the abhorred wheel—there glut thy savage eyes with the *convulsive spasms* of that dishonoured bosom which was once thy pillow!”—She is now carried off without the least effort on the part of Rolla to save her, notwithstanding he had the strongest claim upon Pizarro’s generosity, and might, probably, have successfully interfered on her behalf.

The fifth act opens with some very fine thunder and lightning. Cora is running about wild and distracted*. In the back

* PUFF.

Now she comes in, stark mad, in white satin.

Critic.

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ground, very visible to the audience, but entirely out of the sight of Cora, is a hut : the child is sleeping very soundly on a bed of leaves and moss, it being an invariable rule, as I have before observed, with the personages of this drama, always to sleep in situations of imminent peril or extreme distress, as the Hottentots are said to do in cases of *violent hunger*. We are first presented with a soliloquy, the pauses of which receive great additional effect from a judicious mixture of thunder and lightning, in which the latter sometimes forgets its title to precedence, and follows the thunder at a respectable distance. After the soliloquy we are favoured with a song, which is pretty enough, except that

“ Unconscious that *eternal* night
Veils his for *ever*,”

is putting a *supernumerary* nail in a man's coffin. However, the song certainly has merit, and of a peculiar kind, inasmuch as it makes the thunder and lightning a part of the audience; for these elements, with extreme complaisance and good breeding, contrive to be neither seen nor heard during its continuance. After the song,

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we have another soliloquy, interspersed, like the former, with thunder and lightning. The voice of Alonzo is now heard at a distance, and Cora, perhaps naturally enough, quits her child, and runs to him, after having covered the infant with her veil and mantle. The child in the interim is carried off by two Spanish soldiers, who enter for no other purpose, one of whom sagaciously observes, "The sun, though clouded, is on our left;" a point that could not possibly create any doubt. The sun however is not so much *clouded* but they see the child without difficulty, and carry him away, leaving behind the *veil* and *mantle*. When they have had sufficient time to get clear off, Cora enters with Alonzo, and after doubting whether he should go to the child, or she should bring the child to him, determines upon the latter, and declares, that she'll "*snatch* him from his *very slumber*," *blushing* like the *perfumed morn*, which would, I think, be most *exquisite nonsense*, even without our recollecting that it is a *fine cloudy morning*, and difficult to ascertain whether the sun is on the

right or left. In their distraction for the loss of the infant, Alonzo exclaims, "Here is a hut yet *unobserved*." To this hut, it seems, old Las-Cafas has retired, and now makes his appearance: a frivolous dialogue ensues, which ends by Cora running out, Alonzo running after Cora, and old Las-Cafas hobbling after Alonzo*.

Let us now return to Pizarro's camp, to which Rolla has been brought back by the Spaniards, who take him for a spy. The two foldiers return with the child, which Rolla, finding entreaties ineffectual to obtain, violently seizes in the midst of the Spanish camp, and retires with him, threatening destruction to the first man who follows him. The Spaniards are at first "planet-struck," but recovering from their amazement in about a minute and a half, pursue the Peruvian, and shoot him mortally as he crosses a bridge. This seems to redouble his strength; for with the vigour of Samson, and in violation of a good old proverb, he breaks down the bridge he has

* SNEER.

Oh, never mind so as you get them off; I'll answer for it, the audience won't care how.

passed

passed over, and regains the Peruvian army just in time to present the child to his parents, and dies immediately, ending his own troubles and those of the infant, who, considering his *tender years*, has perhaps the most *arduous character* to sustain in this bustling drama.—I cannot help thinking that with the death of Rolla the drama itself *naturally* gives up the ghost, and that the succeeding scene is but one of those *spasmodic affections* which some *bodies exhibit* after the *vital power* is *extinct*. It represents to my mind the *impotent wriggling* of an *eel's tail*, when his *nobler parts* are *motionless*, and resembles the *experiment* made by certain persons mentioned in Rabelais, who endeavoured to *breathe wind* into the *posteriors* of a *dead ass*. The impression left upon the audience by the death of Rolla is in some degree awful and affecting, but is entirely destroyed by the *jingling* combat between Alonzo and Pizarro, and the *monstrous intervention* of Elvira. Who would suppose that the mighty soul of Pizarro, he “whom no *mortal hazard* could appal,” could be cowed by the *apparition* of an *old gown*!!
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which did not even come upon him by *surprise*, for he had consented immediately before to her wearing it? And what is Elvira's reason for wishing to die in the novitiate habit* in which Pizarro had first beheld her? Truly a very curious one: "she wishes not to suffer in the gaudy trappings which remind her of her shame." I should think nothing would so much *re-mind* her of her *shame* as the *habits* of *innocence*, and that any circumstance which recalled her former situation would increase her present remorse. However, from a peculiar delicacy of mind which I have before had occasion to notice, she thinks otherwise; and having *most fortunately*, in spite of "all her perils, heavy storms by sea, and frightful scapes on shore," preserved this peculiar article of paraphernalia, she puts it on nobody knows why, escapes from prison nobody knows when, and reaches the field of battle nobody knows how; though, as she says, "an awful *impulse*, which her soul could not

* It is somewhat remarkable that Alonzo should have owed his former escape to a *sham friar*, and his latter to a *counterfeit nun*.

resist, *impell'd* her thither;" that is, in other words, she came because she could not help it, and presents Alonzo in the very nick of time with the weapon, with which he immediately kills Pizarro.—Elvira retires to lead a life of penitence, after giving them all some very good advice; and the piece concludes with a funeral dirge over the dead body of Rolla, to which the curtain slowly descends.

Such is the celebrated tragedy of Pizarro, which appears to me in plot, character, and language, equally deficient. The want of greatness of mind in the character of Pizarro I have already observed upon. Rolla, the chief hero of the piece, though his actions are in general great and noble, has nothing *characteristic* in his manner of doing them. Cora is extremely insipid from first to last. The king of the Peruvians, though a very good sort of man, cuts but a sorry figure as a monarch. The mixed dignity and tenderness of Elvira is well supported, and her character, with the exception of now and then lapsing a little too much into the virago, is

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by far the best in the piece. The plot in the two first acts is uninteresting in the extreme ; it much improves in the third ; but falls off at the conclusion of the fourth ; and almost all the incidents of the fifth are a disgrace to the English stage. The language, in general, is inflated and unnatural ; in every page slovenly and ungrammatical ; in many passages spirited ; in one or two sublime. The sentiments are, for the most part, trite and threadbare, now and then new and striking ; and the images, with the exception of very few, have long since familiarized themselves to the frequenters of the theatre. Having never read the original, or any translation of this play, I know not whether the remarks I have made apply to its author or adapter ; I trust they are founded in justice ; I know they are suggested by impartiality ; and I submit them to the cool reflection of the admirers of Pizarro.



THE END.

